PS3503
.R463C5
1921

J3503
R463C5
1921

3503
963

21
py 1

The CHARM

By

CATHERINE T. BRYCE

THE CHARM

By

Catherine T. Bryce

Professor of Elementary Education
Yale University

Boston
The Atlantic Monthly Press

PS3503
.R963 C5
1921

Copyright, 1921, by
THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY PRESS, Inc.

© CLA628394

OCT 25 1921

COSTUMES

The FAIRY QUEEN is dressed in a soft white gown. It may be made of any inexpensive material, as cheesecloth. Gilt stars may furnish trimming. Her crown and star-tipped sceptre are gilt.

PUCK is dressed as a fairy jester, in bright colors, cap and bells.

When they first appear, the SWEET-SPEECH SISTERS are draped in dismal gray. These gray garments may be made like sacks, covering the body from head to foot, with holes cut for the eyes. They must be made to slip off easily. No sleeves are needed. Sombre ugliness is the suggestion they must convey. Under these hateful robes the SWEET-SPEECH SISTERS wear pretty fairy frocks.

The FLOWER FAIRIES are dressed in white and carry hoops or garlands of flowers.

The LIGHT FAIRIES are dressed in soft, pretty colors — rainbow colors subdued — and carry wands. If possible, a tiny electric bulb should be placed at the end of each wand.

TOM is dressed like a real schoolboy, and should be about eight or nine years old.

STAGE SETTING

Scenery or branches of trees should be arranged to suggest a "moonlight circle screen" for the fairy gathering. A strong electric light, covered by a large yellow globe, — the moon, — hangs above. A skillful use of the spotlight will enhance the fairy effect of the scene.

PLACE: *The Fairy Dell*
TIME: *Midsummer Eve*

CHARACTERS

FAIRY QUEEN
SWEET-SPEECH SISTERS
- FAIRY AM-NOT
- FAIRY IS-NOT
- FAIRY ARE-NOT

PUCK
FLOWER FAIRIES
LIGHT FAIRIES
TOM, *a Human Child*

THE CHARM

The FAIRY QUEEN *is seated at one side, on a high throne. She is surrounded by the* FLOWER *and* LIGHT FAIRIES, *who flit about as if exchanging greetings. The smiling faces, the dainty gowns, the bright flowers, the gay music played by an orchestra off-stage, all suggest joyous festivity.*

The QUEEN *is restless, glancing frequently at the moon, then toward the back of the stage, as if expecting somebody. A clear voice is heard singing off-stage. The* QUEEN *settles back satisfied. Enters* PUCK, *singing and dancing.*

PUCK

Over hill, over dale,
Thorough bush, thorough brier,
Over park, over pale,
Thorough flood, thorough fire,
I do wander everywhere,
Swifter than the moon's sphere;
And I serve the fairy Queen,
To dew her orbs upon the green.
The cowslips tall her pensioners be;
In their gold coats spots you see;
Those be rubies, fairy favors,
In those freckles live their savors;
I must go seek some dew-drops here,
And hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear.

As PUCK *advances toward the* QUEEN, *he slyly teases the fairies he passes on the way. He finishes his song standing before the* QUEEN, *and bows low before her.*

PUCK. Fairest Queen, I feared I would be late. If you but knew what kept me —

QUEEN (*interrupting*). You *are* late: see how high the moon is. We will waste no more time listening to your excuses.

Motions to a low stool or hassock at the foot of her throne. PUCK *obeys the gesture and seats himself.*

QUEEN (*to other fairies*). Once more the moon of midsummer shines within our fairy dell. By her light we may dance and frolic till the first cock crows. All too short this night of elfin joy. Let there be no further delay. On with the festivities; and first we will listen to some music from our Sweet-Speech Sisters.

All look toward the stage entrance, with happy expectation on each face. The music, which up to this time has been low and soft and sweet, changes to dismal, wailing, discordant measures, while the three SPEECH SISTERS, *clad in their gray robes, shuffle to the centre of the stage. The other fairies draw aside with looks of surprise, fear, and aversion.*

SPEECH SISTERS (*chanting in hoarse disagreeable voices of changing pitch, like frogs croaking*). Ain't! Ain't! Ain't! Ain't!

The fairies cover their ears and look horrified.

QUEEN (*indignantly*). What does this mean? I called for the Sweet-Speech Sisters, — they who always charm us with their beauty and melodious voices, — and these uncouth figures with harsh voices come in their stead!

While the QUEEN *speaks,* PUCK *hovers around the* SISTERS, *peering into the eyeholes of their robes.*

PUCK. Fairest lady, these are indeed the Speech Sisters, thus sadly changed.

QUEEN (*in anger*). And who dared change three of my loveliest fays into these ugly creatures? Be he the mightiest magician in the world, he shall feel my displeasure!

FAIRY AM-NOT (*in a high shrill voice*). No magician!

FAIRY IS-NOT (*in a disagreeable nasal voice*). A boy!

FAIRY ARE-NOT (*in a harsh guttural voice*). A schoolboy!

PUCK (*jumping about in excitement*). I have it, most lovely queen! I know who cast this spell on our fair sisters! I am sure he is the very boy who nearly caused me to be late at our frolic.

QUEEN (*impatiently*). Hasten thy speech. We all wait.

PUCK. In my wanderings this day, I came to a schoolhouse. Creeping up, I peered through a window. There was no one in the room but the teacher and one boy. The teacher was speaking: "I have told you many, many times never to say *ain't.* (*At the word* ain't *the* SPEECH SISTERS *sway and croak "Ain't! Ain't!"*) I have told you to say *am not,* or *is not,* or *are not.*" (*As the words* am not, is not, *and* are not *are spoken, the* SPEECH SISTERS *in turn repeat each word clearly and sweetly.*) The boy answered, "What 's the difference? They mean the same." — "O Tom," said the teacher, "can't you understand the difference? Every time you say *ain't,* you are turning fair speech into an unlovely thing."

Whenever PUCK *repeats the words of the teacher or* TOM, *he dramatizes the parts, speaking and acting like them.*

SPEECH SISTERS (*moaning hoarsely*). Fair speech turned into unlovely things.

QUEEN. Yes, and Fair Fairies turned into unlovely things!

PUCK. This is the spell the boy, Tom, cast on our fair sisters: by calling them *ain't* in place of their true names, he turned them into the forms they now bear.

ALL THE FAIRIES (*moaning and sighing*). Alas, our fair sisters! Oh, the wicked, wicked boy!

QUEEN. Puck, do you know where this boy is to be found?

PUCK. Yes. The teacher left him in the schoolhouse to study. She promised to return in half an hour to dismiss him. But I thought he needed more than half-an-hour's punishment, so, when I saw the teacher returning, I changed myself into the image of Tom, and met her at the door. I said, "Dear teacher, after this I will always say, *am not, is not,* and *are not.*" The teacher smiled and said, "Oh, I am so glad, Tom." Then she locked the door, — with the real Tom inside, — and went home. Ho! ho! ho! Was n't that a good trick to play on the wicked boy who cast a spell on our sweet sisters?

ALL THE FAIRIES. Ha! ha! ha! A merry jest!

QUEEN. And where is the boy now?

PUCK. Still in the lonely dark schoolroom. I watched him as he tried to escape. I laughed at him and mocked

him when he cried out in fear of the darkness. I left him only when he sank to sleep.

QUEEN. Go, and bring the boy Tom to me.

PUCK *bows and dances away.*

QUEEN (*to* SPEECH SISTERS). Sit ye there until Puck returns.

She waves them to a place on the farther side of the stage from the throne. They sit huddled on log or low bench — a marked contrast to the graceful FLOWER *and* LIGHT FAIRIES.

QUEEN. On with our revels.

The FLOWER FAIRIES *dance. The* LIGHT FAIRIES *divide into two groups: one stands behind the uncouth figures of the* SPEECH SISTERS, *the other behind the* FAIRY QUEEN. *From time to time, they and the* QUEEN *show appreciation and approval of the dance.*

Enter PUCK *leading* TOM. — *They stand near the* SPEECH SISTERS *until the dance of the* FLOWER FAIRIES *is ended. During this time,* TOM *casts many glances of admiration and pleasure toward the* FAIRY QUEEN *and the fairies, and some looks of loathing toward the* SPEECH SISTERS. *He tries repeatedly to move farther away from them; but* PUCK *manages to push him ever closer and closer to them. The dance ends, the fairies forming in graceful groups, all watching* TOM *as* PUCK *leads him to the* QUEEN.

PUCK. Most gracious Queen, may I present to you

Tom, a boy whom I found asleep in a dark lonely schoolhouse.

QUEEN (*smiling at* TOM). You are welcome, Tom. I think you will find our Fairy Dell brighter than the dark schoolhouse, and my fairies more lovely to look upon than the shadows of empty desks.

TOM. Indeed, yes! Oh, I did not know a schoolroom could be so dark and so lonely; but it ain't dark here. I never saw a sight so beautiful as this.

FAIRY IS-NOT *makes a gesture of despair and moans aloud. The* SISTERS *weep and moan in sympathy.*

QUEEN. Then be seated, Tom, and see some more of our merrymaking.

She motions to PUCK, *who places the stool near the* QUEEN'S *throne, but directly across the stage from the* SPEECH SISTERS. *During the dance that follows,* TOM *frequently tries to move his stool so that the dancing fairies may serve as a screen; but* PUCK *always pushes the stool back, so that* TOM'S *pleasure is marred by the sight of the gray figures ever before him.*

QUEEN. Light Fairies, are you ready for your dance?

The LIGHT FAIRIES *come to the centre of the stage. The* FLOWER FAIRIES *group themselves at the rear, with flower-hoops held to make a pleasing background. — If* LIGHT FAIRIES *use wands with lighted bulbs, the stage should be darkened. Only the moonlight should glow above, and a spotlight be thrown on the group about the* QUEEN'S *seat, the*

QUEEN, TOM, *and* PUCK. — *As they dance, the* LIGHT FAIRIES *frequently flash their lights — or point their wands — toward the* SPEECH SISTERS. *Whenever they do this,* TOM *shudders and tries to change his position. The dance ends and the* LIGHT FAIRIES *join the* FLOWER FAIRIES, *forming charming groups, leaving a clear space between the throne group and the* SPEECH SISTERS.

QUEEN. Well, Tom, how are you enjoying our frolic?

TOM. Oh, very, very much; but — but —

QUEEN. But what?

TOM. Who are those gray creatures over there? Why are they here? They ain't fairies. They are too ugly!

FAIRY ARE-NOT *weeps. The* SISTERS *moan in sympathy.*

QUEEN. Ah, Tom, theirs is a sad story. They are three of my loveliest fairies. But a spell has been cast on them that changed them into the forms they now wear.

TOM (*springing indignantly to his feet*). Oh, the big coward! I wish I were a knight, and I'd kill the giant that did it. There ain't anything that I would not do to help them.

At the word ain't *the* SPEECH SISTERS *rock and moan. The other fairies cover their ears. —* PUCK *touches* TOM'S *lips.* TOM *gazes about him in wonder.*

TOM. Why — what's the matter?

QUEEN. You, Tom; you spoke the word that works the spell on my unhappy fairies. No giant has power to

change them. But you, a schoolboy, have transformed them by a word.

TOM. O Fairy Queen, there must be some mistake! I could n't change lovely fairies into such ugly creatures by a word, because I don't know any word that could do it. I ain't the boy that did it.

FAIRY AM-NOT *weeps aloud: her* SISTERS *groan.*

QUEEN. Yes, you are the boy. Their true names are Am-Not and Are-Not. You call them *ain't*, and by the use of that uncouth word, you change them to these uncouth forms.

TOM. Well — Say — Am I dreaming? (*Looking around, bewildered.*) Why I never believed there are fairies, and now —

QUEEN. And now you are seeing them. Ah, yes, Tom, there are fairies. Fairy is but another name for beauty; and, alas! it is as easy to destroy a fairy as to destroy beauty. He who tramples on a beautiful flower tramples on a lovely fairy; he who kills a joyous bird kills a joy-bearing fairy; he who spoils a sweet song injures a melody fairy; he who, by the use of slang, careless articulation, or incorrect usage mars fair speech, deforms my Sweet-Speech fairies. Ah, yes, Tom, he who in any way destroys a beautiful thing, and leaves an unlovely one in its stead, changes a radiant fairy into an unsightly form.

TOM. Well, I am sorry. Truly, there ain't — is n't — anything I would n't do to change them back.

QUEEN. I believe you, Tom, and I will teach you a

charm that will remove the evil spell. Touch each of the Sweet-Speech Sisters three times —

TOM (*with repugnance*). Must I truly touch them?

QUEEN (*coldly*). No; you may leave them as they are. I thought you meant it when you said there is n't anything you would not do to remove the spell. You said you wished you were a knight to punish the wicked giant who, you thought, had done this cruel deed. Am I to believe that you are a boy too cowardly to undo the wrong you, yourself, have done?

TOM. Oh, no! no! Don't say that. I will do anything, anything. (*Rushes toward* SISTERS.)

QUEEN. Hold! Come here, Tom. You do not yet know the full charm.

TOM *returns and stands by* QUEEN'S *throne.*

QUEEN. Touch each Sister three times on her right shoulder, saying her name clearly and distinctly as you touch her. The Sisters will then rise and follow you to the centre of the dell. Leave them there and return to me.

TOM. (*He walks over to the* SISTERS, *and touches* AM-NOT, *saying clearly and distinctly*) Am-Not, Am-Not, Am-Not.

AM-NOT *shuffles to her feet and stands beside* TOM. *In like manner he touches* IS-NOT *and* ARE-NOT, *repeating their names clearly and distinctly. They, too, rise and stand beside him.* TOM *leads, and they follow him to the centre of the stage.* PUCK *capers around them. The other fairies show by*

their faces and gestures their interest in, and anticipation of good from, TOM'S *actions. They clear the way for* TOM *and the* SPEECH SISTERS *as they advance to the centre, forming an irregular semicircular grouping toward rear of stage.*

When he has guided the SISTERS *to the centre of the stage,* TOM *bows to them, and, accompanied by* PUCK, *returns to the* QUEEN.

QUEEN. You have done your part well, Tom. Stand here and watch the further working of the charm. (*To* FAIRIES) Now, Fairies of Light and Sweetness, to you is entrusted that part of the charm that no mortal may know. Draw about the Sweet-Speech Sisters the Magic Threefold Fairy Ring.

Three rings are formed around the SISTERS *in the centre of the stage, the object being the making of a screen for them. During the ring-dance that follows, the* SPEECH SISTERS *remove the ugly gray sacks that cover them.*

When the three rings are formed, PUCK *dances to the front-centre of stage and directs the fairies.*

PUCK

The inner ring — the ring of truth —
Will move from east to west.
The middle ring — the ring of grace —
Will move from west to east.
The outer ring — the ring of beauty —
Will move from east to west.
As we dance, let us sing.

To simple dance-steps, the rings move as directed by PUCK.

PUCK and FAIRIES (*singing*)

(Tune: "Go round and round the valley" — Old ring-game)

Dance round and round our sisters,
Dance round and round our sisters,
Dance round and round our sisters,
And set them free to-day!

An evil spell has bound them,
An evil spell has bound them,
An evil spell has bound them,
But they 'll be free to-day!

For Tom has come to save them,
For Tom has come to save them,
For Tom has come to save them,
And set them free to-day!

Dance round and round our sisters,
Dance round and round our sisters,
Dance round and round our sisters,
And set them free to-day.

During the dance, PUCK *circles the fairy rings. This gives him an opportunity to be in the rear and out of sight when the* SISTERS *remove the gray sacks. These may be passed through the rings to* PUCK, *who conceals them in any convenient place, in an unobtrusive way. When the sacks are disposed of,* PUCK *dances again to the front of the stage, and, at the conclusion of the song, raises his belled wand. The* FAIRIES *stand, still in the ring.*

QUEEN. Come forth, Sweet-Speech Sisters.

At her words the rings break at the front, and out dance the three SISTERS — *now dressed as radiant fairies. They bow low to the* QUEEN, *then sing.*

SPEECH SISTERS

(Tune: "Three Little Maids from School" — *The Mikado*)

Three little fays of speech are we,
Merry as merry as merry can be,
For Tom at last has set us free;
Three merry fays are we!

AM-NOT. I am the fairy that's named *Am-Not.*
IS-NOT. I am the fairy that's named *Is-Not.*
ARE-NOT. I am the fairy that's named *Are-Not.*
ALL. Three fays of speech are we!

AM-NOT. Sometimes humans call us *Ain't!*
IS-NOT (*sadly*). Oh, it's enough to make one faint!
ARE-NOT (*angrily*). No, it's enough to provoke a saint!
ALL. Then doleful fays are we!

ALL. But — now we're merry as merry can be
As everyone may plainly see,
For Tom at last has set us free;
Three grateful fays are we!

TOM. Oh, how beautiful you are! Oh I am glad, glad, so glad you're free! To think that you could look so ugly when it *is not* your fault!

FAIRY IS-NOT (*dancing forward and standing beside* TOM). Here I am, Tom. I shall always come when you call me by my real name — *Is-Not.*

TOM. Oh, lovely Fairy, stay with me always. You *are not* angry with me now I know.

FAIRY ARE-NOT (*skipping gayly to* TOM). Ha, ha, Tom! Here I am. You said *Are-Not*, and so I came.

TOM (*taking each sister by a hand*). You came, and I *am not* going to let you go again.

FAIRY AM-NOT (*dancing forward and taking* SISTERS' *hands, thus facing* TOM). Oh, Tom, you called me too, when you said *Am-Not*. I'm so glad, for I want to stay with my sisters and you!

PUCK *and the other fairies form a ring around* TOM *and the* SWEET-SPEECH SISTERS, *singing, "The Fairies in the Dell," to the tune "The Farmer in the Dell." During the singing, the fairies advance toward* TOM *and the* SISTERS, *then retreat, — forward and backward, — using short skipping steps.*

PUCK AND THE FAIRIES

The fairies in the dell, the fairies in the dell,
Heigh-O, my dearie O, the fairies in the dell.

The Fairies all thank Tom, the Fairies all thank Tom,
Heigh-O, my dearie, O, the Fairies all thank Tom.

He set our Sisters free, he set our Sisters free,
Heigh-O, my dearie, O, Tom set our Sisters free!

As they end the song, all bow low to TOM.

TOM. Oh, don't thank me. It is enough that you forgive me for the wicked spell I worked on your beautiful sisters.

QUEEN (*advancing to* TOM *and taking his hand*). But we do thank you, dear Tom, for when you worked the spell, you did not know that your careless words were changing beings of beauty to ugly creatures. As soon as you did know, you worked a charm to bring back beauty and destroy ugliness.

TOM. O dear Queen, I thank you. I shall always remember your words, and in all that I do, and in all that I say, I will try to make something beautiful.

(PUCK *and the* FAIRIES, *closing in at rear and sides of central group in attractive tableau, sing, "Now as you've promised," to the tune of "Oats, Peas, Beans, and Barley Grows."*

SPEECH SISTERS

Now as you've promised, you must obey,
You must give heed to all you say,
Use Fair Speech in work and play,
And we'll be bonny and glad and gay.

PUCK *and* FAIRIES *repeat the song — Cock crows in distance.*

CURTAIN

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0 015 799 963 1

PS3503
.R963C5
1921

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0 015 799 963 1